



Identification of Conifer Trees in Iowa

This publication is designed to help identify the most common trees found in Iowa. It is based on vegetative characteristics including leaves, fruit, and bark. It is neither complete nor without possible oversights.

Separate species are grouped by similar characteristics, mainly based on type and arrangement of leaves. These groups are; awl- or scale-like needles; single needles, flattened with rounded tips; single needles, square in cross section, with pointed tips; and needles in bundles or fasticles of two or more. Remember, vegetative characteristics are quite variable; use more than one specimen for comparison.

Awl- or scale-like needles



Thuja occidentalis

Northern White Cedar

Leaves are flattened and only of the scale type; cones have 4-6 scales; foliage is light green.



Juniperus Virginiana
Eastern Red Cedar

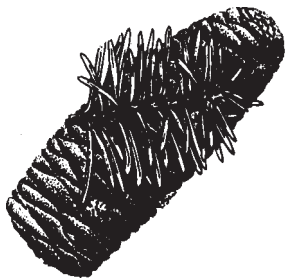
Leaves are dark green; leaves are both awl- and scale-like; cone is dark blue and berry-like.



Juniperus communis
Common Juniper

Leaves are awl shaped; cone is dark blue and berry-like.

**Single needles,
flattened with
rounded tips**



Pseudotsuga menziesii

Douglas Fir

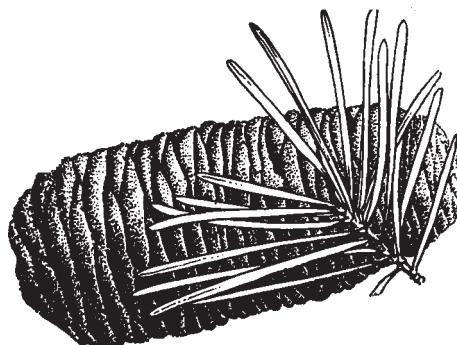
Needles occur on raised pegs;
3/4-1 1/4 inches in length; cones
have 3-pointed bracts between
the cone scales.



Abies balsamea

Balsam Fir

Needles are blunt and notched at
the tip; 3/4-1 1/2 inches in length.



Abies concolor

White (Concolor) Fir

Needles are somewhat pointed,
curved towards the branch top
and 1 1/2-3 inches in length; silver
green in color.

**Single needles,
square in cross
section, with
pointed tips**

Picea pungens

Colorado Blue Spruce

Needles are 1-1 1/4 inches long;
blue green in color; very sharp
cone is 2 1/2-4 1/2 inches long.



Picea abies

Norway Spruce

Needles are 1/2-1 inch long;
needles are dark green; foliage
appears to droop or weep; cone
is 4-7 inches long.



Picea glauca

White Spruce

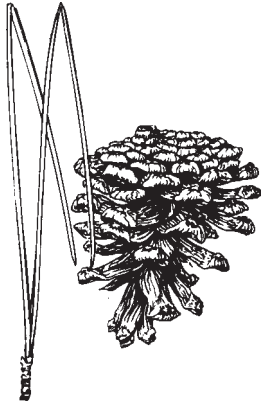
Needles are 1/2-3/4 inch long;
needles are dark green with a
whitish tint; cone is 1-2 inches
long.



Pinus resinosa

Red Pine

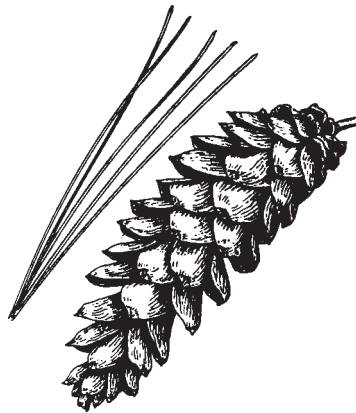
Needles in bundles of two, 4-6 inches long. Needles are thin and brittle; snap when bent.



Pinus strobus

White Pine

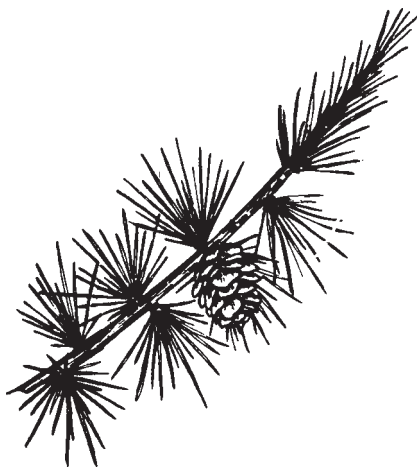
Needles in bundles of five; 2-4 inches long.



Larix sp.

Larches or Tamaracks

Many needles (7-24) per fasticle occurring on spur-like shoots; needles fall in autumn.

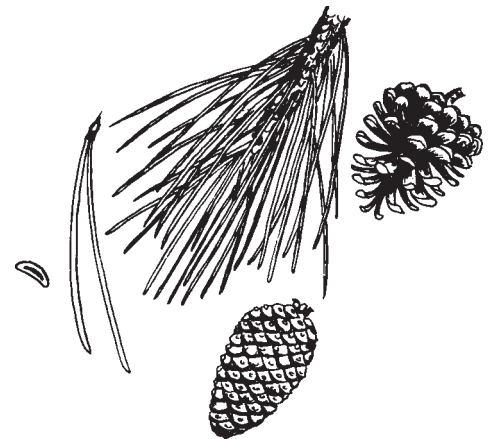


**Needles in bundles
or fasticles of
two or more**

Pinus nigra

Austrian Pine

Needles in bundles of two, 4-6 inches long; needles are thick and stiff, folding when bent.

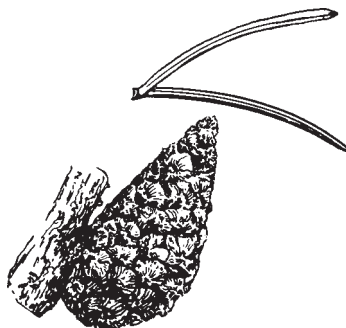


Needles in bundles or fasticles of two or more (continued)



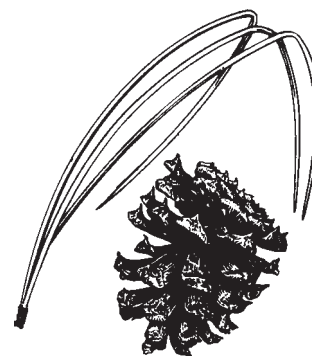
Pinus sylvestris **Scotch Pine**

Needles in bundles of two,
1 1/2-3 inches long and twisted;
bark on older trees is orange and
scaly.



Pinus banksiana **Jack Pine**

Needles in bundles of two,
3/4-1 1/2 inches long, twisted;
cone tips curve toward the
branch tips.



Pinus ponderosa **Ponderosa Pine**

Needles in bundles of twos and
threes, 5-8 inches in length.

Prepared by Paul H. Wray, extension
forester.

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... and justice for all

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